

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Triangle Battery and Service Company Building

other names/site number Kansas City Auto Laundry; Cordry's Auto Laundry & Service

2. Location

street & number 3001-03 Gillham Road [N/A] not for publication

city or town Kansas City [N/A] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64108

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In
my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be
considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Mark A. Miles 08/28/03
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
[] entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [].
[] determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet [].
[] determined not eligible for the
National Register.
[] removed from the
National Register
[] other, explain
See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

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5. Classification**Ownership of Property**

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing Noncontributing

1 buildings

sites

structures

objects

1 0 Total

Name of related multiple property
listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National
Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use**Historic Function**

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

Current Functions

VACANT

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY
AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

Materials

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other Terracotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property Less than 1 acre**UTM References**

A. Zone 15 Easting 363440 Northing 4326015

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Elizabeth Rosin, Partnerorganization Historic Preservation Services, LLC date May 15, 2003street & number 323 West 8th Street, Suite 112 telephone 816-221-5133city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64105**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black-and-white photographs** of the property.**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Urban Coeur Development, LLCstreet & number P.O. Box 30345 telephone 816-561-9700city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64112

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Triangle Battery and Service Company Building
Jackson County, Missouri

PROPERTY NAME

Other Names: Cooper's 66 Service Station; Spin-In Auto Service; Hyde Park Laundry and Dry Cleaners; Riviera Cleaners

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building is a two-story, reinforced concrete building located at the southeast corner of Gillham Road and 30th Street, approximately three miles southeast of the Central Business District in Kansas City, Missouri. The rectangular footprint hugs the property line on all four sides. The design is a unique amalgam of Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century American Movements architecture that appeared on Main Street business districts across the country in the early twentieth century. The dark red, textured, tapestry brick veneer is punctuated by decorative terracotta banding that enframes the fenestration on the primary, north, and west elevations. Although the building is two stories tall, there is no clear, continuous separation between the first and second stories, reflecting, in part, the open floor plan and the historic, single-function interior space. The building has three bays of windows across the west elevation and seven bays of windows across the north elevation. Cast stone blocks form a low water table below the window openings on the north elevation. All of the windows on the primary elevations are wood. Although plywood covers all of the first-story openings, including the drivecourt bays, and most of the openings on the east elevation, the original fenestration remains intact. The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building has experienced alterations since its construction in 1920. Archival evidence indicates that many of the alterations were completed prior to 1940, during the period when the building housed a series of automobile service businesses. These changes, including the expansion of the drivecourt, do not inhibit the viewer's understanding of the building's historic function, form, or architectural style. In fact, the expansion of the drivecourt represents a modification that increased the functionality of the building for its intended purpose. Unfortunately, no historic architectural plans are available for the building and only one historic photograph has been located. Regardless, neither the existing first-story windows, nor the subsequent reconfiguration of the drivecourt bays inhibits the ability of the building to convey its original auto service function or its significance as an uncommon adaptation of the traditional Main Street commercial building form for the automobile service industry.

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SETTING

The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building occupies a rectangular two-and-a-half lot parcel at the southeast corner of 30th Street and Gillham Road, on the western edge of Kansas City's Longfellow/Dutch Hill residential neighborhood. Remnants of a concrete sidewalk run along the north and west sides of the building. Scored, sloped concrete aprons indicate the location of vehicular entrances to the building. McGee Trafficway crosses Gillham Road one-half block north of 30th Street, creating a small triangular parcel of land immediately north of the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building. The Gillham Road-McGee Trafficway corridor developed as a secondary auto service district after World War I, and many of the remaining buildings along these streets continue to serve an auto-related or other light-industrial function. The National Register nominated Greenlease Cadillac Building is one block to the north, at the northwest corner of Gillham and McGee. A small building that housed the greasing racks of a now-demolished gas station is across the street to the north on the triangular parcel. There are also vacant and surface parking lots to the north and east.

EXTERIOR

North and West Elevations

Alternating sections of the north and west walls project or are recessed slightly from the neighboring wall sections. With the exception of the three central bays on the north elevation, which form a single section, each bay of windows forms its own wall unit. The projecting sections identify the original vehicular entrances to the building. The north and west walls terminate in a tall crenellated parapet that surrounds the flat roof. Between the pairs of square piers at the top of each wall section is a slightly recessed brick panel with a header brick frame and a thin terracotta sill. The panels have clay tile coping while the crenellated piers have flat limestone caps.

On the second story of the primary elevations, each bay contains a band of three, twelve-light windows that pivot vertically. The single exception is the southernmost bay on the west elevation, which has a band of four such windows instead of three. The first-story openings, aligned below the upper-story windows, include the open bays of the front drivecourt on the west and, on the north, four window openings, one window and doorway pair, and two vehicular bays filled with overhead garage doors. The first-story windows have a three-part configuration, featuring a large, plate glass window flanked by eight-light sidelights.

Decorative terracotta enlivens the dark brick façade of the north and west elevations and references the business of the building's original tenant. On the north elevation, continuous two-story bands of cream-colored terracotta rise from the cast stone water table to frame both the first- and second-story windows.

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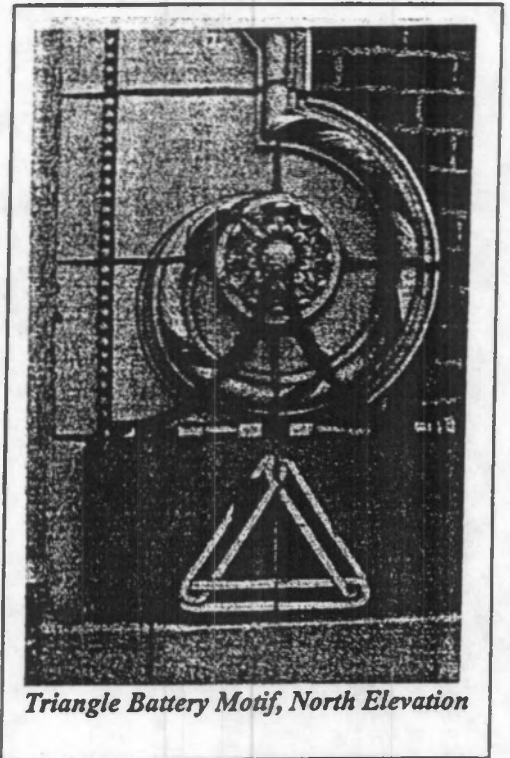
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Around the perimeter of the band is a cream-and-black-colored cable detail. A band of marble-sized beads lines the interior edge of the frame. At the base of the triple bay and the easternmost bay on the north elevation (the two original sections of windows), the cable element terminates in a spiral with a rosette at the end. The black cable passes through the rosettes and connects to the top of a "battery" on which the cable spiral rests. The top of each battery features square "terminals" at the cable connection and is adorned with a triangle formed from interlocking loops akin to fan belts. The terracotta spandrels between the stories also feature a motif of alternating, interlocking triangles. The terracotta on the west elevation matches the second-story window frames and spandrel panels found on the north elevation.

Three bays lack spandrel panels between the first- and second-story openings. On the north elevation, they are absent from the east garage bay and the original eastern drivecourt bay. On the west elevation, the spandrel is missing from the central drivecourt bay. Interestingly, each of these bays was originally a vehicular entrance. While a 1940 tax assessment photograph shows the same condition as today, the physical evidence suggests that this brick was originally covered with a canopy structure. The exposed edges of wood beams and metal rosette medallions found in the terracotta frames of only these three bays suggest that rigid canopies originally hung at these locations.



Triangle Battery Motif, North Elevation

The westernmost bays of the north and south façades contain a drivecourt that enabled a vehicle to drive through the building from north to south. A modern, metal overhead garage door fills the bay at the north end of the drivecourt. Plywood panels cover the south entrance as well as the bays across the front (west). Square concrete piers resting on wider brick bases delineate the first-story bays. Brick veneer clads the full height of the piers at the building's front corners. A course of concrete blocks forms a base for the plywood that currently fills the openings on the south and west.

As shown in the historic photo, by 1940 the drivecourt occupied the two westernmost bays at the front of the building. At some point, the interior front (west) wall was moved west one bay, and the drivecourt entrances on the north and south ends of the western bay were filled. The infill on the south (rear) elevation included a plate glass display window set in a stucco surround. A steel I-beam spans the top of the opening. On the north, a tripartite window and a cast stone water table fill the opening to match the remainder of this elevation.

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Pairs of low metal bumpers protect the corners of the east garage entrance on the north elevation and the drivecourt entrance on the south elevation. Holes in the water table next to the enclosed drivecourt bay on the north elevation suggest that bumpers had been located here as well.

An enameled sign with neon tubing hangs near the center of the west wall, perpendicular to the face of the building. White lettering on the dark blue sign reads, "DRIVE IN AND SAVE."

East and South Secondary Façades

The treatment of the east and south elevations is distinctly secondary to the primary façades. Common red brick fills the grid of the reinforced concrete structure that is exposed on the east elevation. Plywood boards cover a number of openings on this elevation and concrete block fills one opening. Extant fenestration includes a pair of eight-over-four light and one six-over-three light, double-hung industrial metal sash windows in the second story. There is also a vehicular entrance at the north end of the first story filled with a wood-paneled overhead door.

Painted hollow clay bricks with a striated surface compose the building's south wall. The faint remnants of a painted wall sign reading "[LAUNDE]RERS and CLEANERS" are discernible at the top of the wall. A large parged section of the wall's first story at the center of the façade indicates the party wall where an adjacent building previously stood. Vestiges of three window openings are visible on the interior in the first story of this section of wall. Each opening had a lintel and a sill composed of a single course of header bricks. The roofline on this elevation steps down gently from the west to the east. Plain clay tile forms the coping. There are four nearly square openings in the second story that contain louvered metal vents and metal fans. Toward the east, there is one small doorway filled with a metal clad fire door. Concrete blocks fill a second opening in the first story.

A pair of large metal-framed billboards rises above the parapet. The billboards face northwest, toward the traffic traveling south on Gillham Road. Attached to the north side of the building, a small metal ladder allows service access to the billboards.

INTERIOR

A single, large open space dominates the building interior. The masonry and exposed concrete structure form the wall surfaces. Hexagonal concrete columns positioned at regular intervals create narrow asymmetrical aisles on the north and south that flank the large, open work floor at the center of the building. Interestingly, the columns do not align with the bays on the exterior of the building.

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The interior front (west) wall features aluminum-framed plate glass windows sandwiched between horizontal bands of stucco. Where the glazing is currently missing, sheet plastic covers the window openings. A single entrance centered in the wall, provides access from the drivecourt to the interior. The entrance has a wood surround that holds a pair of narrow wood doors with large single lights and a single wood transom.

A small partitioned area houses an office and a restroom at the center of the building's rear (east) bay. Wood studs frame the partition walls. Sheets of plywood cover the outward facing sides.

On the north, west, and, east sides of the building, a mezzanine run along the building perimeter between the columns and the exterior walls. The mezzanine has a concrete floor that is carried on concrete joists that extend from the exterior walls to the concrete cross beams connecting the columns. On the west end of the building, the mezzanine was later expanded one bay in depth. The additional section of mezzanine has wood framing and flooring. Much of the mezzanine has no railing. Where a railing is present, it consists of parallel horizontal members carried between widely spaced vertical posts. All of the railing elements are dimensional lumber. Two wooden staircases lacking railings provide access to the mezzanine. One set of stairs rises from behind the front wall near the center of the building. The second set rises from within the partitioned office, adjacent to the basement stairs. The rear staircase rests on a concrete footing, the form of which suggests that it was the base of the building's original staircase.

The interior surfaces are unadorned, reflecting the historic utilitarian function of the space. Exposed concrete beams, running north-south, form the ceiling in the northern three-quarters of the building. The ceiling of the southern quarter (south of the interior columns) is wood frame, with wood joists connecting the concrete columns to the masonry wall. This treatment, plus small triangular ledges cast at the top of the southernmost interior columns, the hollow brick south wall, and the asymmetrical west elevation, suggests that the architect designed the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building with the anticipation of a future expansion. Except for the second-story walls above the mezzanine, white paint covers the ceiling and wall surfaces.

The floor has a relatively smooth concrete surface. However, immediately inside the door on the west end, the surface of the concrete floor is approximately four inches above the main floor and covered with vinyl tiles.

The fenestration and skylights create a bright interior space. Two skylights pierce the ceiling at symmetrical intervals above the open floor. Opaque glass set in aluminum frames fills these openings. A series of fluorescent strip lights suspended from the concrete ceiling beams supplements the natural lighting.

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INTEGRITY

Alterations

Archival records document three episodes when changes occurred to the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building. The J. H. Thompson Construction Company received a permit for unspecified "remodel and alterations" in April 1933 valued at \$2,000. Eight years later, the T. G. Schweiger Construction Company received a building permit for "alterations to store front" valued at \$1,500. Finally, in September and October 1954, the Schweiger Construction Company again received permits for alterations "to [the] existing laundry plant" and "to [the] laundry office and yard," respectively. This work had a total value of \$7,000. The second permit specifically mentioned "wood, [g]lass, masonry, [concrete foundation]."

While the exact scope of each of these alterations is unclear, it is possible to make some educated guesses based on physical evidence and available archival information.

- In three places, the terracotta spandrel panels are missing below the second-story openings. Inspection of the physical building suggests that some form of canopy was originally attached in these locations. Canopies are not present in the 1940 photograph. It is possible that they were removed as part of the 1933 renovation.
- Physical evidence also suggests that the building originally had three vehicular entrances in its north and west elevations and that both elevations had symmetrical first stories. A vehicular bay was centered in the west elevation; on the north elevation, vehicular bays occupied the second bays in from the east and west ends. Evidence of this configuration includes the missing terracotta spandrel panels, canopy anchors, metal bumpers (or bumper attachment holes), and sloped concrete driveway aprons. Additionally, on the north elevation, these two bays have identical terracotta ornament that is simpler than the treatment of the window bays.

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- By 1940, the drivecourt had been expanded. The Tax Assessor's photograph shows that a customer could drive in through the central bay on the west elevation as well as through the two western bays on the north and south ends. The photo also appears to show a solid wall with product displays located at the rear (east) of the drivecourt, between the two central interior columns. This may have been part of the 1933 remodeling.
 - At some point after 1940, the drivecourt was narrowed to the single bay at the west end of the building. The original vehicular entrance, located toward the west end of the north elevation, was changed to a window. This alteration included installing a cast stone water table that matched the design and height of the original water table in the adjacent bay. The resultant window opening matches the size and shape of the adjacent opening. It is possible that this change also resulted in the "storefront" alteration described in the 1941 permit. This timing coincides with a change in building use from auto-service to laundry.
 - The interior west wall was installed after 1940. The style and appearance of the doorway now centered in the interior west wall suggests that it dates to the building's original construction and may have been moved from a previous location on the premises. It is likely that this work was included in the "storefront" alterations permitted in 1941.
-
- Jackson County Tax Assessor Photograph, 1940*
- Unfortunately, the 1940 photograph does not clearly show the first-story windows on the north (30th Street) façade. The mullions, faintly visible in the image, suggest that paired rather than tripartite windows filled the openings at that time. While the window openings retain their original size, configuration, and trim, the existing tripartite sashes do not match the design, proportions, or profiles of the second-story windows. The current sash design, which features large plate glass panes flanked by multi-light casements, implies an addition date in the second quarter of the twentieth century. Because identical fenestration also fills the window opening of the original west vehicular bay on the north elevation, it is probable that the original windows were replaced after 1940, perhaps in association with the 1941 storefront modifications or the 1954 laundry improvements.

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- Construction of the partitioned office and restrooms as well as the expanded mezzanine and both staircases may have resulted from the 1954 remodeling or from subsequent, undocumented improvements to the building.-
- The 1940 photo shows a blade sign attached to the north wall of the building's northwest corner and retractable striped canvas awnings above the second-story windows of the west elevation. Neither of these features remains intact, although the window openings retain some of the hardware for the awnings.

Evaluation of Integrity

National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation states that the evaluation of integrity "must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance."¹ The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building is significant for its embodiment of distinctive characteristics of a type, period, and method of construction. It is an exceptional example of the traditional Main Street commercial building form adapted for an auto-service use. The building design evolved over a twenty-one year period, in order to remain functional for its customers, as the auto service industry and the design of auto service buildings matured. When examined within its period of significance, the integrity of the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building remains strong in six of the seven areas outlined in *Bulletin 15* and has been only partially compromised in the remaining one area. Of the changes described above, only the replacement of the first-story window sashes, the narrowing of the drivecourt, the relocation of the interior front (west) wall, and the removal of the blade sign occurred after the period of significance. These types of alterations are common among other buildings individually listed in the National Register in Kansas City.

Location and Setting: The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building occupies its original location and setting in a commercial/light industrial neighborhood along a major arterial road outside Kansas City's Central Business District. Because of its historic function, integrity in these two areas is critical to the building's significance. The history of this area is specifically related to the expansion of the automobile service industry after World War I, and the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building is one of the last surviving resources that reflect these associations.

Design: Despite the alterations listed above, the building's design retains a high degree of integrity within its period of significance. As noted in *Bulletin 15*, "the question of integrity is answered by whether or not the property retains the identity for which it is significant."² The physical features that define the building as an adaptation of the Main Street commercial building form for an early automobile service

¹ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 1997 (rev), 44.

² *National Register Bulletin 15*, 45.

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function remain clearly intact. The organization of spaces, reinforced concrete construction technology, and polychrome terracotta ornamentation were minimally impacted by these non-historic alterations. More significantly, the design elements that define the property's function all remain intact. These specifically include the western drivecourt bay, including the open treatment of the west elevation facing Gillham Road; the open interior plan and mezzanine; the rhythm of fenestration; and the elaborate ornamental terracotta that alludes to the business housed inside. The only notable changes made after 1941 are the relocation of the interior front wall, the enclosure of the eastern drive court bay, and the replacement of the first-story window sashes. Other alterations are minimal and do not impact the character-defining elements.

Materials: As described above, the only notable loss of historic materials is the replacement of the first-story window sashes that appears to have occurred after 1940. However, this change did not affect the size or shape of the historic openings and much of the historic terracotta trim also remains intact. The building otherwise retains all of its significant historic building fabric, including the reinforced concrete structure, the highly articulated tapestry brick veneer, the polychrome terracotta trim, and the original wood pivot windows on the second story of the primary façades. Overall, there is a high degree of integrity in the area of materials.

Workmanship: The high retention of original materials corresponds to a high level of integrity of workmanship. Workmanship, the physical evidence of labor and skill, is especially evident in the fine masonry and terracotta exterior that remain substantially intact.

Feeling and Association: Because the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building retains a high degree of integrity in the areas described above, it clearly continues to convey "the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time" as well as a direct link to the context for which it is significant.³ All of the critical character-defining elements of the property remain intact — its Main Street commercial block form; the exterior decorative and stylistic treatments; the open, industrial floor plan; the substantial reinforced concrete structure; and the design elements associated with its original function. Together, these elements allow the building to successfully communicate its relationship to the auto service industry between 1920 and 1941 and to the buildings erected at that time to house such businesses. The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building retains a high degree of integrity in the areas of Feeling and Association.

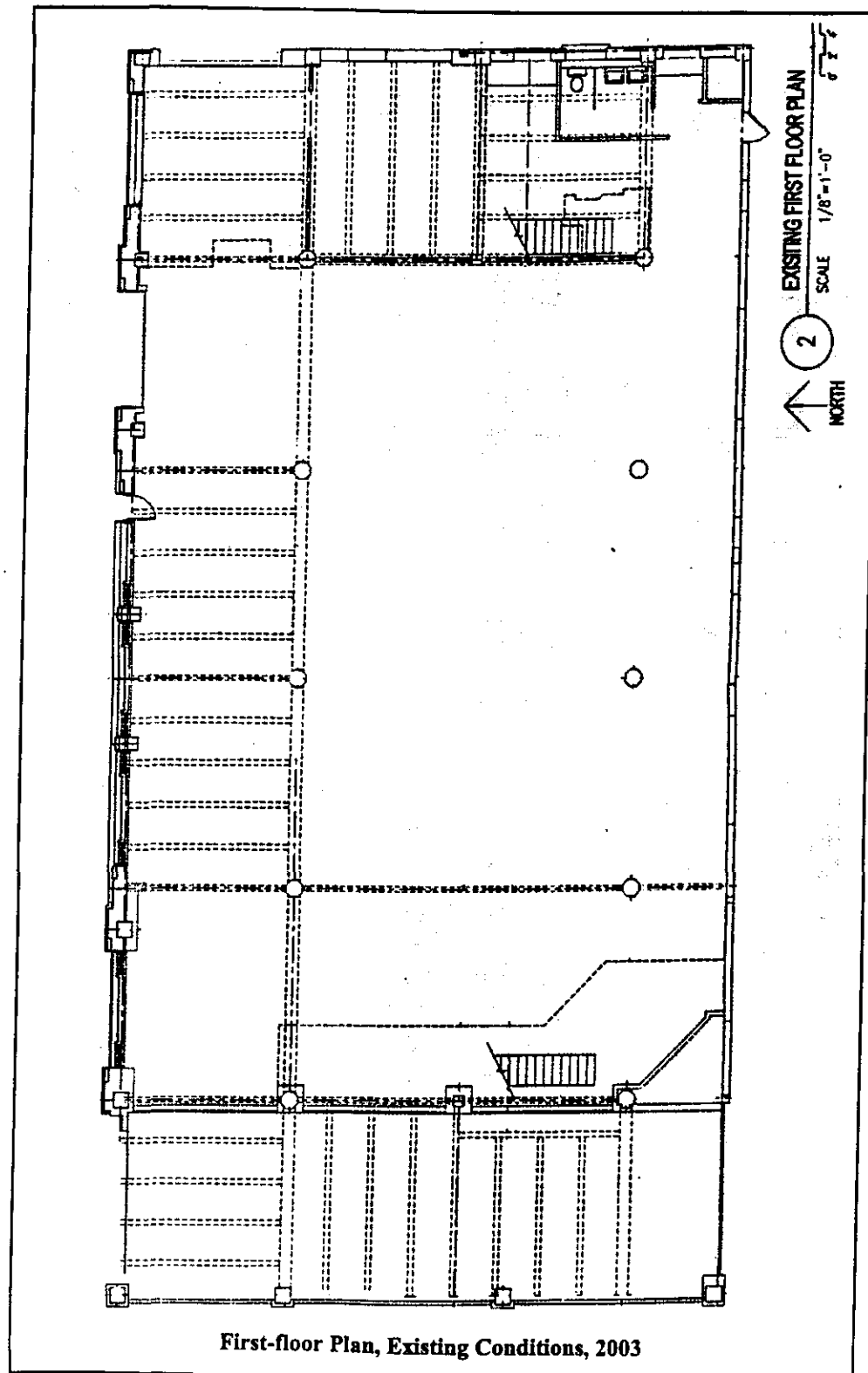
³ Ibid.

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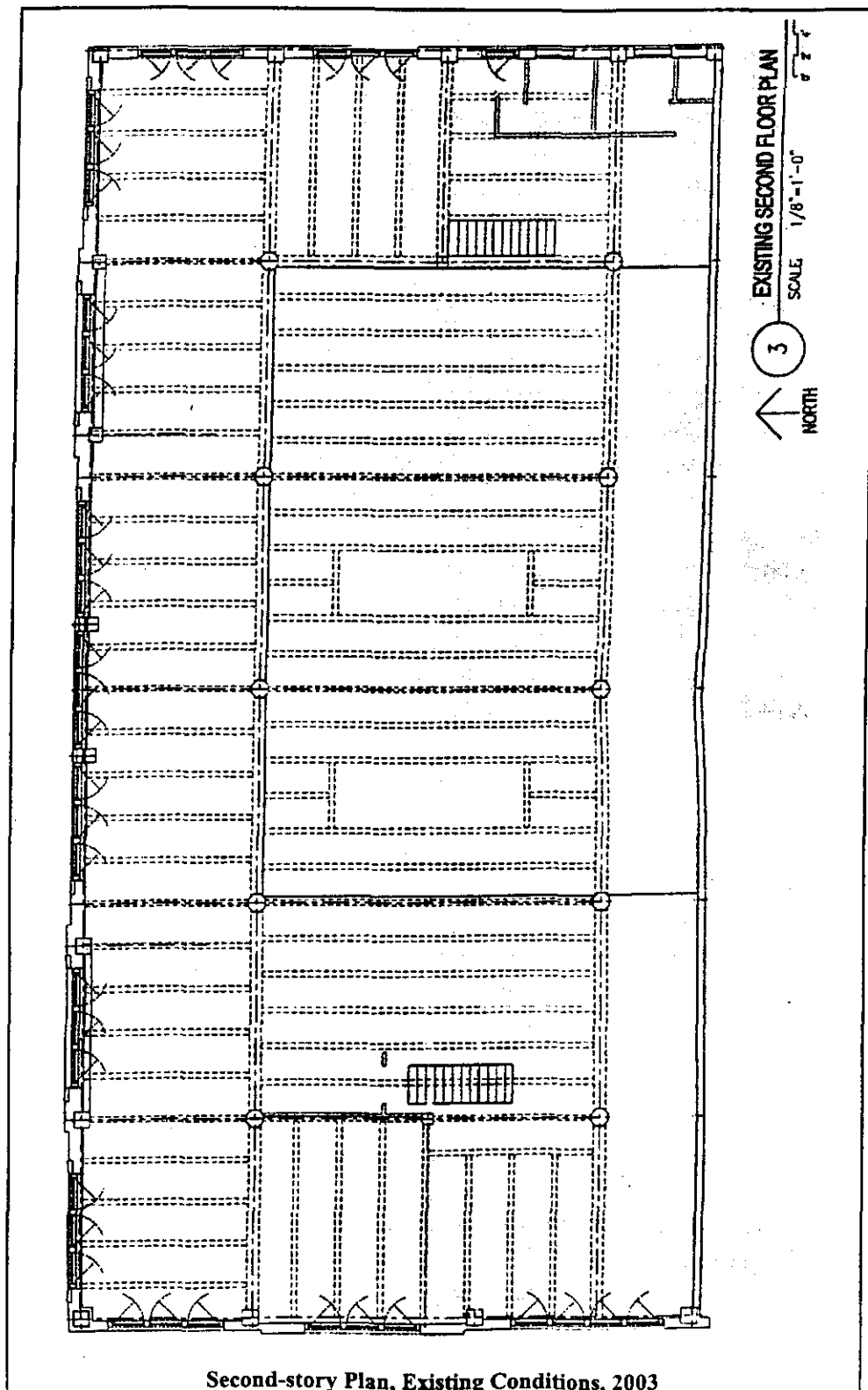


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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building, built in 1920, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Commerce. Located at the southeast corner of 30th Street and Gillham Road in Kansas City, Missouri, the building was among the first constructed in a new district of automobile service facilities that developed beyond Kansas City's first "automobile row." The construction of this new auto-service node responded to growing volume of traffic traveling through the intersection of McGee Trafficway and Gillham Road during the daily commute between the downtown business district and the developing residential neighborhoods to the south and east. Within this context, the design of the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building represents a transitional adaptation of the traditional commercial building form to accommodate an automobile service function. The building's design evolved between 1920 and 1941, culminating by 1940 in an open drivecourt that passed through the building's two western bays. The period of significance for the property is 1920-1941, reflecting the years in which the building housed automobile service businesses. This period begins with the construction of the building in 1920 and ends in 1941, prior to alterations that appear to reflect the building's change in function from an auto service facility to a laundry and dry cleaning facility. By the start of World War II, advances in the automobile industry consolidated service functions in larger super service centers, making obsolete the small specialty auto service businesses such as those housed in the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building.

ELABORATION

THE COMMERCE OF AUTOMOBILE SERVICE

When automobiles first appeared at the turn of the twentieth century, they were novelties owned only by the wealthy. Making repairs, servicing vehicles, or even finding fuel were cumbersome, complicated tasks. As cars became increasingly affordable and more common, services became increasingly accessible. Initially, automobile-related enterprises were adjunct to existing businesses. Livery stables and carriage shops leased and sold cars. Feed stores and groceries sold gasoline. The rocketing demand for vehicles and services, however, soon necessitated specialized businesses that catered solely to the needs of automobile owners.

The first buildings constructed specifically as auto showrooms, garages, and gas stations were located on Main Street in a community's existing business district. By default, these buildings followed the traditional formula for Main Street commercial design. Like the Triangle Battery

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and Service Company Building, they were simple one or two-story brick structures with footprints that abutted the sidewalk, creating a dense streetwall with the adjacent buildings. Usually the only feature distinguishing an auto service building from its neighbors was the inclusion of a garage door in the main façade to accommodate vehicles moving in and out. This adaptation of the traditional commercial building form lent an air of respectability to the still nascent automobile industry.⁴

As transportation systems evolved, from streetcar to trolley to automobile, commercial development followed residential expansion outward, away from the historic commercial core.⁵ In Kansas City at the turn of the twentieth century, the new Parks and Boulevards System was under construction. Residential neighborhoods were becoming increasingly distinct from commercial areas as new subdivisions were developed south and east of downtown, following the expansion of the road system and streetcar lines.

Nationally, by the 1910s, this movement reflected the burgeoning popularity of the automobile as well as population growth. As traditional commercial districts became increasingly congested with automobile traffic, developers constructed new commercial districts closer to the residential neighborhoods, away from the urban core. This development typically included strips of one or two story buildings that paralleled the new arteries. Developers quickly adapted the traditional Main Street formula to accommodate automobile parking — either by widening streets to allow ample on-street parking or by building distinct parking lots with driveways cut through curbs. With increasing frequency, destination buildings were located at the rear of a lot, rather than at the rear of the sidewalk, to allow and invite parking in front.⁶

The popularity of the automobile in Kansas City reflected national trends. In 1908, fewer than four hundred vehicles were licensed in Kansas City. Fifteen years later, that number had grown to nearly fifty-five thousand and, in 1930, there were over seventy-six thousand licensed automobiles on the city's streets.⁷ To accommodate the spiraling number of vehicles, the City Plan Commission worked to improve key arterial routes. Between 1908 and 1923, the number of paved street miles in Kansas City grew from three hundred to six hundred, an increase of 100

⁴ Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 40-41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁷ *Kansas City (MO) Times*, 31 December 1930 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

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percent.⁸ In addition to the improvement of existing roads, this increase reflected the construction of expanded "trafficways" designed to move vehicles through the city without congestion and delays. Among the arteries improved by 1923 were McGee Street, from 22nd to 31st streets; Main Street, between 20th and 27th streets, including a viaduct over the railroad tracks at Union Station; Troost Avenue, between 33rd and 48th streets; 18th Street, east of Main Street; Bluff Street, above the West Bottoms; 19th Street, between Main and McGee streets; 31st Street, between McGee Street and Prospect Avenue; and 39th Street, east of Main Street.⁹

The success of the automobile exacerbated the crowding and congestion downtown and forced auto service and sales facilities to seek new locations. It was not long before these businesses left the older commercial districts for newer, more accommodating commercial areas. In Kansas City, "auto row" initially developed in an area south of the downtown financial and business center, along the 1500 through 2000 blocks of McGee Street and Grand Avenue.¹⁰ However, as the popularity of the automobile continued to soar, congestion ensued even in auto row, spurring automobile dealers and service providers to again seek alternate locations.

Until World War I, the auto service industry was exceedingly specialized. A vehicle owner might buy gas from one business, have his battery replaced at a second, his tires patched at a third, and his car washed at a fourth.¹¹ As its name implies, the Triangle Battery and Service Company probably concentrated its business on servicing automobile batteries. By the mid-1920s, the proliferation of the automobile stimulated a change in this system if for no other reason than the convenience of the customer. *Motor Age* magazine urged the development of multi-function service stations that offered the benefits of "the Tire Shop, the Battery Station, the Mechanical Shop, the Greasing Rack, the Automobile Laundry, and the Gas Station" under one roof.¹² The large oil companies quickly capitalized on the idea, constructing distinctive structures designed with familiar branding. The "super service stations" accommodated a range of automotive needs in long, low, one-story buildings set back on their lots to provide customers with easy movement on to and off of the street.¹³ By the 1930s, independent specialty service businesses, such as the Triangle Battery and Service Company, were obsolete.

⁸ "Kansas City's Motor and Street Grown Since 1908," *The Kansas City (MO) Star*, 24 June 1923 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ City of Kansas City, Missouri, "Midtown Survey Report," (Kansas City: City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission) 1981, 13-14.

¹¹ Ibid., 9.

¹² Liebs 102-103.

¹³ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 28-29.

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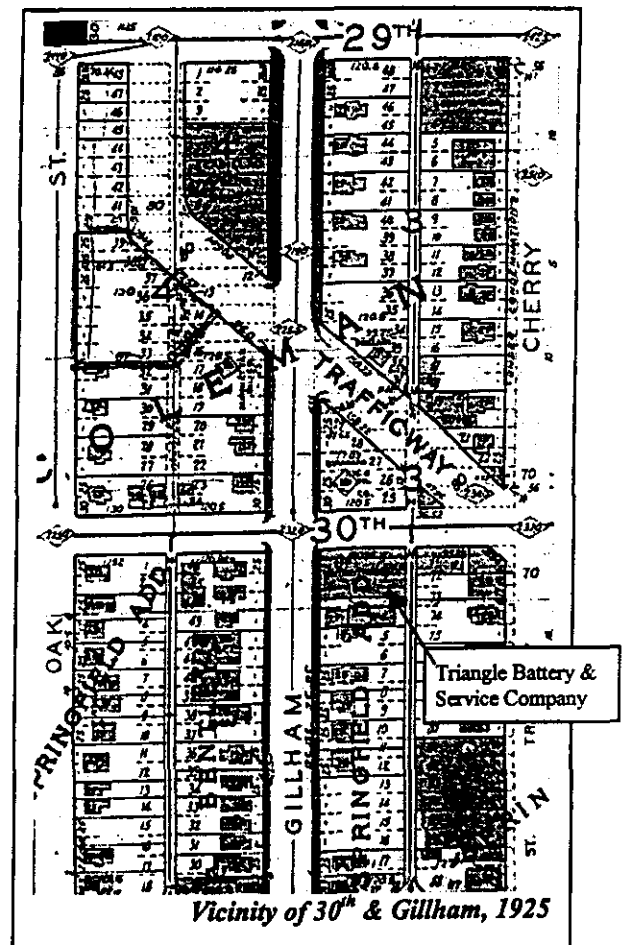
Triangle Battery and Service Company Building
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Evolution of the 30th and Gillham Neighborhood

In 1909, the vicinity of 30th and Gillham was a residential neighborhood of narrow lots filled with substantial two-story frame dwellings and two-story brick apartment houses.¹⁴ While the west side of 2900 block of Gillham Road was almost completely developed, the east side of the street, below the eastern edge of the old Union Cemetery, remained largely unimproved.

In 1916, Kansas City Cadillac dealer Robert Greenlease selected the 2900 block of Gillham Road as the site for his new sales office and regional distributorship. Bordered on the south by the expanded McGee Trafficway, Greenlease commented, "Until McGee Road [sic] came, there was no location in Kansas City to meet our requirements.... The increasing number of ... drivers demands a service building outside the downtown congestion."¹⁵ The location outside the business district offered two distinct advantages — lower land values and closer proximity to the growing residential population.¹⁶ The owners of the Triangle Tire and Battery Company must have agreed with Greenlease's assessment. Just four years later, they constructed their new business one block away.

Responding to the development of McGee Trafficway and the ever-increasing number of automobiles, the construction of a cluster of auto-related businesses near McGee Trafficway and Gillham Road signaled a shift in neighborhood character by 1925. In addition to the Greenlease dealership and the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building, the intersection included Sinclair, Standard Oil, and Manhattan Oil Company



¹⁴ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Kansas City (Missouri) and Its Environs*, (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909), (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

¹⁵ "Greenlease Motor Car Co. - New Building Proposed," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 31 August 1916 (Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections), Microfilm.

¹⁶ Liebs, 14-15.

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service stations on the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners, respectively.¹⁷ All five of these buildings were designed with the automobile in mind. Greenlease Cadillac featured a large lot at the rear (north) of the property that was easily accessible to customers seeking service for their cars. Likewise, in front of the showroom at the south end of the building was a narrow drive court where prospective customers could park or where the dealers could display the latest model in clear view of everyone driving past. The three service stations featured small squarish buildings located near the center of sizable, irregularly shaped lots. The prominent corner lots afforded patrons ample room to exit traffic before fuelling up. The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building also took advantage of a corner lot by incorporating multiple garage entrances that enabled patrons to exit the busy street and drive into the building for service. These locations were additionally convenient for suburban commuters who drove by on their way to and from downtown every day.

By 1950, the 30th and Gillham neighborhood was substantially commercial. The buildings of automobile sales and light industrial businesses had replaced most of the dwellings that previously lined these blocks.¹⁸ The Sanborn map reveals that the 2900 and 3000 blocks of McGee Trafficway, Gillham Road, and Cherry Street (one block east) housed six new and used auto sales businesses (including Greenlease Cadillac), seven auto service businesses, and four filling stations. However, the Triangle Battery and Service Company was not among them. No longer in business, the company disappeared from the city directory around 1930. Although the building at 3001 Gillham Road now housed a steam laundry, the new owners continued to take advantage of the auto-friendly design by offering customers a discount for drive-through service.¹⁹

The Auto-centric Design of the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building

As automobile service businesses began to move away from the historic urban core, it became less imperative for them to adopt a traditional Main Street appearance and there was more incentive to develop a unique look and auto-friendly form.²⁰ At the same time, advocates of the City Beautiful Movement stressed the need to preserve a respectable appearance and recommended that auto service buildings be required to match the design of other commercial buildings in their neighborhood. It was common in this early period for gas and other service

¹⁷ Frank W. Tuttle, et al, *Atlas of Kansas City, Missouri and Environs*, (Kansas City: Tuttle-Ayers-Woodward Company, 1925). Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room, Microfilm.

¹⁸ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Kansas City (Missouri) and Its Environs*, (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1909 Corrected to 1950), (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

¹⁹ *Polk's Kansas City (Jackson County, Missouri) Directory*, Vol. LXXVI, (Kansas City: R. L. Polk and Company, 1951), 449.

²⁰ Liebs, 43.

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stations to adopt a brick veneer with terracotta trim that closely resembled their cousins in older commercial districts.²¹ For example, the design of the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building is a still early and somewhat conservative elaboration of the basic main street commercial block. Brick walls enclose a cast concrete structure that itself was a departure from traditional masonry construction. The reinforced concrete accommodated the weight of the vehicles serviced inside and permitted the wide-open span of the interior space. A crenellated parapet emphasizes the building's substantial massing and structure. Terracotta trim highlights the rhythm of the fenestration and defines the company's imagery. Around the windows, terracotta ropes form cables that enframe the openings. The "cables" connect pairs of "batteries" that flank the base of the openings. The triangle logo marking each battery is composed of loops that resemble fan belts. Additional triangles arranged in an interlocking pattern adorn the terracotta spandrel panels between the first- and second-story windows.

Within this traditional guise, however, the design of the new facilities also addressed the convenience of the motorists bringing their cars for service. Designs that enabled cars to enter the building were expensive but removed congestion from the street.²² The Triangle Battery and Service Company Building is an excellent example of this transitional period design. The rectangular mass fills every inch of the property in a manner reminiscent of Main Street, abutting the concrete sidewalks on the west and north primary elevations. On the rear (east) elevation, an alley runs directly behind the building, and the south elevation previously shared a party wall with a building subsequently constructed on the adjacent lot. What distinguishes the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building from other commercial buildings of this period are multiple vehicular entrances — one at the center of the Gillham Road (west) façade and two on the 30th Street (north) façade.

Before 1940, vehicular access to the building had been further improved by the expansion of a drivecourt that penetrated the width of the building fronting Gillham Road via the two western bays on the north (30th Street) and south elevations. In an automobile, a patron could enter or exit the building from Gillham Road via the south elevation or the central bay of the west façade, or from 30th Street via the north elevation. These openings, visible in the 1940 photo, are substantiated by their surviving curb cuts. A fourth curb cut toward the rear of the building on 30th Street also provided access to the interior service bays. This auto-accessible architectural form is very unusual in Kansas City.

²¹ Ibid., 98-99.

²² Richard Longstreth, *The Drive-In, The Supermarket and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles, 1914-1941* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), 7.

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Many early twentieth century auto service businesses located in Kansas City's Central Business District or along the McGee/Grand Auto Row have been demolished or significantly altered for other uses. While some of the surviving examples retain vestiges of a single vehicular entrance in the main façade, the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building is distinguished by its corner location and a design that evolved to maximize accessibility via multiple entrances as well as a drive-through configuration.

THE HISTORY OF THE TRIANGLE BATTERY AND SERVICE COMPANY BUILDING

The Triangle Battery and Service Company erected the building at 3001-3003 Gillham Road in 1920. The company received a permit in April of that year for the construction of a 60-foot by 121-foot, one-story, brick and stone building with a concrete foundation and composition roof. The building was valued at \$22,000.²³ *Western Contractor* magazine recorded the construction in progress on May 5, 1920. Interestingly, the magazine described the new building as two stories instead of one and listed the value as \$40,000. This was double the figure on the permit and probably a more accurate description of the resulting building. The *Western Contractor* notice identified Durham and McMasters as the building owners; Frederic E. McIlvain as the architect; James E. Taylor as the general contractor; and the Triangle Battery and Service Company as the lessee. The Hydraulic-Press Brick Company provided the bricks, and the Concrete Products Company supplied the reinforced concrete.²⁴

The Triangle Battery Company was a short-lived venture. According to the 1920 city directory, the Triangle Battery and Service Company was led by President George Durham, Vice-President Heber W. Leinbach, and Secretary-Treasurer Henry Stankewitz, none of whom appeared in the 1919 city directory. When examined in conjunction with the information from *Western Contractor*, it is likely that George Durham constructed the building through his partnership with McMasters and leased it to his other venture, the Triangle Battery Company. By 1924, Durham was no longer an officer of the company; Leinbach was president and treasurer, Mack H. Friedmann was vice-president, and Jeanette L. Hunter was secretary. By 1928, the Triangle Battery and Service Company, now known as the Triangle Battery and Tire Service Company, had moved to 4233 Troost Avenue. Leinbach and Friedmann remained officers of the company. The Triangle Battery and Tire Service Company maintained the location on Troost Avenue through the end of the decade. After 1929, the company no longer appears in city directories.

²³ City of Kansas City, Missouri, Building Permit number 12661. Kansas City: City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, 1920).

²⁴ *Western Contractor* 37 (5 May 1920): 32

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After standing vacant for a year, the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building at 3001-3003 Gillham Road housed two car wash businesses. The first, in 1929, was the Kansas City Auto Laundry Company. Operated by James F. Koup, this was one of five car washes listed in the city directory that year. Less than four years later, Cordry Auto Laundry and Service, operated by Chester W. Cordry, took over the premises. A building permit for remodeling and alterations issued to the J. H. Thompson Construction Company in April 1933 may correspond to the start of Cordry's tenancy.²⁵ By 1934, Roy M. Cordry had succeeded Chester Cordry as company president and manager. Other officers that year included Jack Rieger, Emanuel M. Grossman, and Butler Disman. The auto laundry, or car wash, emerged as a sub-industry of automobile service in the mid-1920s. With unpaved roads and car designs that left mechanical components exposed, it was important that automobiles be cleaned regularly to maintain good working condition. Established in the Midwest as early as 1914, auto laundries usually consisted of one or more stationary racks that enabled workers to clean the undercarriage, sides, and top of a vehicle.²⁶

Over the next few years, the property changed tenants and functions several times. In 1939 and 1940, Guy D. Cooper operated Cooper's 66 Service Station at this location; in 1941, it was the Spin-in Auto Service operated by Harry Hain and John J. Kraker.

Although the 1941 city directory lists Spin-in Auto Service as the building tenant, it is possible that its new tenant, Hyde Park Laundry, moved in mid-year. This significant change in function would explain the permit issued for "storefront alterations" in June 1941.²⁷

Hyde Park Laundry, later Hyde Park Laundry and Dry Cleaners, was managed by John M. Graham. During the 1940s, Hyde Park Laundry had a bold listing in the city directory that advertised, "Drive In and Save 15%." In the 1950s, Elmer F. Cons operated the laundry, sharing the building with another laundry, the Riviera Cleaners, between 1950 and 1953. Run by the Maupin family (Howard, Naomi, and Overton), the Riviera Cleaners left the Gillham Road location prior to 1955. It is probable that the substantial renovations indicated by two 1954

²⁵ City of Kansas City, Missouri, Building Permit number 96140. (Kansas City: City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, 1933).

²⁶ Longstreth, *The Drive-In*, 21.

²⁷ Ibid, 28-29.

²⁷ City of Kansas City, Missouri, Building Permit number 10881A. (Kansas City: City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, 1941).

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building permits were completed after Riviera Cleaners moved out.²⁸

The building currently stands vacant. The new owner, Urban Coeur Development, LLC, plans to rehabilitate the building for residential and/or retail use. It will be the centerpiece of an extensive redevelopment project that includes rehabilitation of other older buildings, new construction, and creation of park space. This project will complement other redevelopment activities in the area, including the proposed conversion of the nearby National Register-nominated Greenlease Cadillac Dealership to condominiums.

Building Architect

Building architect Frederic E. McIlvain moved to Kansas City as a child from Bloomington, Illinois. In 1892, while still a teenager, he began working under prominent Kansas City architect Louis Curtiss. Curtiss, a forerunner in the use of structural concrete and reinforced concrete technology, greatly influenced the future work of McIlvain.²⁹ A profile that appeared in the *Historic Kansas City Foundation Gazette* suggests that Curtiss's influence was so complete that McIlvain never developed a unique personal style beyond what he assimilated working in Curtiss's office.³⁰

In 1908, McIlvain entered into partnership with Frank Jackson. Jackson had trained with local architects Frederick Hill and Van Brunt and Howe. The firm designed commercial and industrial buildings that spanned the gamut of functions from theaters, hotels, and office buildings to stores and factories. The most notable work by Jackson and McIlvain is the Elms Hotel in Excelsior Springs, Missouri. Shortly after completing the original design, the hotel was destroyed by fire in 1911 and the firm was hired to design the rebuilt structure. The Elms Hotel was listed in the National Register in 1985.

Following Jackson's death in 1916, McIlvain established an independent practice, which he continued until his retirement in May 1926. McIlvain continued to design a broad array of building types. In addition to his 1920 design for the Triangle Battery and Service Company Building, McIlvain's notable solo projects in Kansas City included the Liberty Theater, the Security Store and office, Rothchild's department store, and a new store for the S.S. Kresge

²⁸ City of Kansas City, Missouri, Building Permit number 39745A and 40045A. (Kansas City: City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, 1954).

²⁹ Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*, (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956), 407-08.

³⁰ Sherry Piland, "A Kansas City Architect: Frederick McIlvain," *Historic Kansas City Foundation Gazette* January/February 1985, 4.

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Company, none of which survive. His design for the Palace Clothing Company at 1126-1128 Grand Avenue was listed in the National Register in 1985. McIlvain also designed the Monticello Hotel in Longview, Washington. In 1925, McIlvain won both silver medals for architecture awarded by the Kansas City Business District League.³¹ His winning projects included the Burnap-Meyer building at 1021 McGee Street and a remodeling of the Diamond Brothers Store at 1104 Walnut Street, the latter of which is no longer extant.

McIlvain retired from architecture in May 1926. Shortly thereafter, he traveled to California where he died a few months later.

³¹ "Architects, Business District League Award," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 14 February 1926 (Kansas City: Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Missouri Valley Room), Microfilm.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1 and 2 and the north half of Lot 3, except that part taken for street and parkway, BENTLEY'S SPRINGFIELD ADDITION, a subdivision in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This nomination includes the parcel of land historically associated with the resource.

PHOTO LOG

Photographer: Brad Finch, F-Stop Photography, Kansas City, Missouri
Date of Photographs: April 2003
Location of Negatives: Urban Coeur Development, LLC

<u>Photograph No.</u>	<u>Description and Camera View</u>
1)	North and west elevations, view looking southeast.
2)	West and south elevations, view looking northeast.
3)	West elevation, view looking east.
4)	North elevation, view looking south.
5)	South elevation, view looking north.
6)	East elevation and northeast building corner, view looking south.
7)	Detail of terracotta ornament, north elevation, view looking south.
8)	Detail of terracotta ornament showing the Triangle Battery Company motif.
9)	Interior view of drivecourt, looking south.
10)	Interior view of drivecourt, looking north.
11)	Interior view of main space, looking west.
12)	Interior view of main space, looking east.
13)	Mezzanine, view looking east.
14)	Mezzanine, view looking southwest.

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